



Consumer Connections

Brought to you by the Consumer Affairs and Outreach Division
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, FCC

October 2018

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month

The FCC would like to remind consumers about the potential for identity theft or other privacy risks when using Wi-Fi networks and Bluetooth connections.

- Be aware that hackers may quickly compromise sensitive information stored on devices and in online accounts.
- Always lock devices with secure passwords, and do not share passwords with anyone.
- Check the validity of available Wi-Fi hotspots to avoid connecting to an imposter hotspot.
- Do not exchange data on sites unless "https" appears at the beginning of the web address to ensure that any transmitted data will be encrypted.
- Adjust smartphone settings so they do not automatically connect to nearby Wi-Fi networks.

Click on the link below for more information, about how to protect yourself online.

[Consumer Guide Link](#)

Pacific Northwest Consumer Outreach Rural Tour

In September, representatives from the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau's Consumer Affairs and Outreach Division hit the road in the Pacific Northwest to visit rural and underserved areas in Washington and Oregon. Roger Goldblatt, Deputy Bureau Chief, and Outreach Specialists, Alma Hughes and Becky Lockhart, travelled 1,042 miles



Alma Hughes, Becky Lockhart, Mayor Jill Boudreau and Roger Goldblatt (left to right) kick off the Pacific Northwest Rural Tour in Mount Vernon, Washington.

to reach communities in both states. They shared information via presentations at senior centers and libraries and at meetings with town mayors, police chiefs, and other local leaders. In addition to public meetings, FCC staff met individually with library directors and local officials in Longview, Mount Vernon, Olympia and Seattle, WA, and Bend, Portland and Sandy, OR. Also, Roger Goldblatt presented on a panel at the NTCA - the Rural Broadband Association's 2018 Fall Conference on September 18th in Seattle, WA and spoke at the Financial Crimes & Digital Evidence Conference on September 20th in Salem, OR.

The purpose of the trip was to expand outreach to consumers in rural areas. They sought to build partnerships with local consumer-oriented entities to help improve the effectiveness of future outreach efforts and establish ways to work together to reach consumers and community members. This was accomplished by providing consumers with information and resources on issues that affect their daily lives. Specifically, FCC staff provided warnings and alerts on recent scams that have cost consumers millions of dollars. Topics covered included:

- Telephone bill related items such as robocalls, spoofing, scam alerts, slamming and cramming.
- Information about the Incentive Auctions and the ongoing Broadcast Transition: What consumers need to know about rescanning their television or converter box.
- Broadband and digital inclusion: Encouraging everyone to get online.
- Protecting mobile devices from loss or theft.
- Communicating during an emergency.
- How to file complaints and comments with the FCC.

Upcoming Events

Open Commission Meetings

10:30 am - 12:30 pm EDT
Room TW-C305
445 12th Street S.W.
Washington, DC
Livestream: [fcc.gov/live](https://www.fcc.gov/live)

- November 15, 2018
- December 12, 2018

For Info on all FCC events including upcoming Open Commission Meetings:

[fcc.gov/events](https://www.fcc.gov/events)

In Case You Missed It

Disability Advisory Committee Meeting

October 3, 2018

[Event page link](#)

FCC, AARP Tele-Townhall for Consumers on Phone Scams

September 18, 2018

[Event page link](#)

After Storms, Watch Out for Scams

Scammers are always looking for new victims. Unfortunately, natural disasters and severe weather create opportunities for fraud in their wake, when people are at their most vulnerable.

[Link to Consumer Tips to Avoid Scams after Storms](#)

Contact Us

Please contact us if you have any questions about consumer issues and outreach at the FCC or have any recommendations for this newsletter.

outreach@fcc.gov

Visit our webpage at:

[fcc.gov/outreach](https://www.fcc.gov/outreach)



Alma Hughes presents at Twin Cities Senior Center in Chehalis, WA.

A highlight of the trip was a presentation for consumers at the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library (WTBBL) in Seattle, WA. In addition to providing consumer information at the event, FCC

staff in Washington DC participated remotely to provide their expertise on topics especially relevant to this audience that included low vision and blind attendees. Will Schell, an attorney from the Disability Rights Office addressed a question about Video Description and Terry Pacheco, the FCC's Accessible Format Specialist, explained how to receive FCC materials in Braille, large print and other accessible formats.

More information can be found at: [Pacific Northwest Rural Tour Event Page Link](#)

FCC and AARP Co-Host Tele-Townhalls for Consumers on Phone Scams

Last month, the FCC and AARP co-hosted two public Tele-Town Halls where approximately 44,000 AARP members and consumers listened to FCC experts Kristi Thornton and Kristi Thompson discuss how to avoid phone scams and how the agency is helping consumers through enforcement actions. The FCC also explained initiatives that will enable service providers to improve caller ID and call blocking technology for use on both landlines and cell phones.

Patrick Webre, Chief of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, wrote a [blog](#) about the event highlighting that robocalls and scams are costing victims millions of dollars each year. He stated that the financial threat of scams targeting older people who are living off their retirement nest eggs or limited incomes is especially great.

The FCC has recommendations for avoiding unwanted calls in online consumer guides about [spoofed caller ID](#) and [illegal robocalls](#). For more information about distinct types of consumer fraud and scams, visit the [AARP Fraud Watch Network](#).

FCC Emergency Assistance Available 24/7

The FCC is available 24 hours a day to address emergency communications needs due to Hurricane Florence, Hurricane Michael and other natural disasters in all affected areas including U.S. territories such as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The FCC reminds emergency communications providers, including broadcasters, cable service providers, wireless and wireline service providers, satellite service providers, emergency response managers, first responders, and others needing assistance to initiate, resume, or maintain communications operations during hurricanes, to contact the FCC Operations Center for assistance at 202-418-1122 or by e-mail at FCCOperationCenter@fcc.gov.

We encourage consumers to contact their provider to resolve any service-related issues resulting from weather-related outages. If you are unable to resolve this matter with your provider, file a complaint or share your story with the FCC through the Consumer Complaint Center (consumercomplaints.fcc.gov). The site has instructions for filing a complaint and information about what happens after a complaint is filed.